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AUTHOR Higgins, Andrew H.
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ABSTRACT

In Australia, many teachers begin their careers in rural schools, a posting for which they are often ill-prepared. This book addresses the concerns of beginning teachers or other teachers about to take up rural appointments. The first chapter examines the context of rural schools, differentiates between "rural education" (education tailored to the needs of rural students and communities) and "education in rural areas" (provision of a common curriculum to rural schools), discusses issues of equality, and explores implications of various types of isolation. The second chapter reviews the history of rural education in Australia. The next three chapters examine characteristics of isolated rural families, students, and teachers, including: (1) parental educational attainment, occupation, and educational attitudes; (2) student aspirations, dropout rates, reasons for dropping out, and gender differences in school completion; and (3) teaching conditions, teacher-community and teacher-parent relationships, teacher experience and attitudes, and discipline problems. The sixth chapter addresses curriculum concerns, advantages and disadvantages of small schools, innovative programs in music and environmental marine studies, how teachers can get funding for innovative programs, and teaching methods and classroom techniques for multigrade classrooms. The seventh chapter discusses the use of various distance education technologies. A final section offers remarks on practical teacher preparation for rural schools and questions for consideration related to each chapter. Contains 56 references and suggestions for further reading. (SV)